

Hezbollah's Passport: Religion, Culture, and the Lebanese Diaspora

A Monograph

by

MAJ Michael E. Filanowski

United States Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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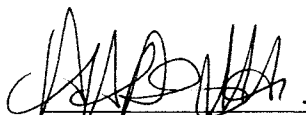
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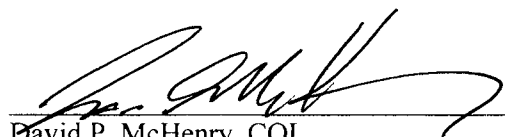
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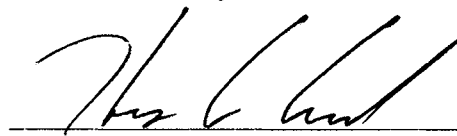
Name of Candidate: MAJ Michael E. Filanowski

Monograph Title: Hezbollah's Passport: Religion, Culture, and the Lebanese Diaspora

Approved by:


_____, Monograph Director
Alice Butler-Smith, PhD


_____, Seminar Leader
David P. McHenry, COL


_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Henry A. Arnold III, COL

Accepted this 23rd day of May 2015 by:


_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Hezbollah's Passport: Religion, Culture, and the Lebanese Diaspora, by MAJ Michael E. Filanowski, 54 pages.

Hezbollah – The Party of God - emerged in the chaos of the Lebanese Civil War as a fringe Shi'a militia organization and evolved into a global non-state actor that wields considerable political and military power. The party's activities during the war, including the attack against the United States Marine Corps barracks in 1983, established the organization as the pre-eminent terrorist organization in the region. Following the war, Hezbollah expanded their operations to Africa and South America, targeting Israeli and Western interests' taking its concept of Islamic Resistance worldwide. The 2006 War between Hezbollah and Israel demonstrated its conventional military capability, delaying and disrupting IDF advances and retaining enough of its own strength to declare victory after a month long series of engagements. The current fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria pits Hezbollah, allied with Iran, Syria, Iraqi Shi'a organizations and to an extent, the United States in a war to stabilize the region. The growth of Hezbollah, from a marginal branch of established Lebanese Shi'a political movements into the international power player, within 33 years is nothing short of remarkable. While the military aptitude and terrorist mystique of the party continue to capture the imagination of Western thinkers these characteristics are not the basis of Hezbollah's long-term success or strategy. The logic of the organization, derived from Islam and Lebanese culture, provide more insight into understanding Hezbollah than any examination of the tactics behind its terrorist or militant activities.

By examining the religious and cultural aspects of its foundation, Hezbollah emerges as much more than a militia that grew a political wing once the fighting stopped. Hezbollah is a movement that unites populations living in every corner of the world because of its unique form, combining religion and culture with political, militant, and social services that never strayed from the organization's founding Islamic doctrine. Hezbollah presents a complex problem for strategists and political thinkers; this monograph shows that the initial Western understanding of the group as a terrorist militia has not changed since the 1980s and fails to incorporate the logic, derived from religion and culture, into its actions and messages today.

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Introduction

“This is the era of victories. It is the outcome of this culture and this conviction.”¹

—Hasan Nasrallah, Speech of the Hezbollah Secretary General

Hezbollah is not a terrorist organization. This runs contrary to the opinion of most Western historians and strategists. However, in their rush to label the organization, they miss the nuance. Hezbollah’s response to a 2003 civilian airline crash in the Republic of Benin, with many of its supporters onboard, demonstrates that the “Party of God” is much more than a violent collection of radicals fighting for a narrow ideology.² In the days following the crash, Hezbollah sent counselors from Lebanon to Benin with condolence payments for the families of the dead passengers.³ Hezbollah’s immediate reaction in consoling and caring for the families affected by the Benin crash indicates the importance of its religious and cultural attributes ignored by the analytical perception of Western sources. Hezbollah is a popular religious and cultural movement that appeals to a broad coalition of constituents resulting in a dynamic political, social, and military organization that wields significant domestic control and international influence.⁴

Hezbollah emerges from the religious history of the Middle East in general and the specific cultural experience within Lebanon. Although it started as a fringe movement within

¹ Hassan Nasrallah, “Speech of Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah commemorating the Day of Resistance and Liberation held in the Southern village of Bint Jbeil on May 25th, 2014,” *The Vineyard of the Saker* (blog), May 28, 2014, accessed September 25, 2014, <http://vineyardsaker.blogspot.com/2014/05/speech-of-hezbollah-secretary-general.html>.

² Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 254.

³ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*, 256.

⁴ Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 9.

Lebanon, Hezbollah found ways to emphasize and de-emphasize aspects of its structure, achieving a variety of goals, which further reinforces the group's legitimacy at home and allows international access to the global Shi'a diaspora communities. Hezbollah connects the past religious, cultural, and political history of the Shi'a to the present resulting in sustained relevance over the last 33 years. An understanding the factors that formed this type of non-state actor allows the United States a better understanding of asymmetric threats in the twenty-first century.

Why did Hezbollah, which started as a fringe religious militia in the Lebanese Civil War, become a worldwide phenomenon and a significant global non-state actor? On the surface, it seems unlikely that Hezbollah could rise to the prominence that it possesses today. The organization emerged within the smallest ethnic population, constrained to a hardscrabble existence in the mountainous southern region and the Beqaa valley in Lebanon.⁵ How could an organization, from such humble beginnings, build its political, religious, and militant strength to a level that enabled support from far-flung diasporic populations giving it enhanced international influence and reach?

The religious, cultural, and social characteristics of Hezbollah enable its global influence and this capability is transferable to any organization with similar drive and vision. Hezbollah successfully transitioned from a religious militia to governing body by exploiting popular Shi'a narratives, implementing Sharia governance at home, and exploiting cultural attributes of Lebanon. The combination of these factors resulted in the organization's legitimacy as the local and global benefactors of the Lebanese Shi'a. The transition of armed groups, like Hezbollah, into political organizations presents a complex problem for the future foreign policy of the United States. The traditional methods of international statecraft are insufficient to disrupt these type of

⁵ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 49.

non-state actors who possess the ability to operate outside the boundaries of normal inter-state relations. Only through a holistic understanding of the logic behind Hezbollah can one begin to understand how the organization sees itself and what to anticipate for it in the future.

The history of Hezbollah is an evolutionary story that weaves its way from the death of Imam Hussein in 680 AD, through the end of European colonialism and the mobilization of Shi'a in Lebanon during the 20th Century, to the fractured state of the Middle East today. The Shi'a sect of Islam emerged following the death of the Prophet Mohammed during the infighting amongst his followers over leadership of Islam that culminated in the massacre of Imam al-Husayn.⁶ This event gave birth to the most prominent internal narrative for all Shi'a, that they were the oppressed and persecuted minority since the early history of their religion. Imam Husayn's martyrdom presents a model of courage and sacrifice that warns future generations of Shi'a to not wallow in fatalism and act to help themselves.⁷ Hezbollah is a manifestation of the deep religious and cultural desire for the Lebanese Shi'a to shape their own future.

The emergence of Hezbollah has roots in the religious and political movements of the late 1960's and early 1970's that united Lebanese Shi'a the prior to the Lebanese Civil War. Following Lebanon's independence from France in 1943, the emergent form of Lebanese politics was a confessional system of government characterized by a power sharing arrangement between the Shi'a and Sunni Muslims and Christian Maronite clans.⁸ The Shi'a community, largely

⁶ Heinz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, trans. Allison Brown, Princeton Series on the Middle East (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 9.

⁷ Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.), 51.

⁸ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 11.

uneducated and living in rural communities occupied the lowest social status within Lebanon in this era.⁹ This schism between the more powerful Sunni, and Christian populations kept the Shi'a from achieving meaningful political representation and further marginalized the community. The marginalization of the Shi'a population resulted in two significant social changes within the community: mass emigration to Africa, Latin America, and North America with ties to their families in Lebanon and political mobilization along religious lines of the Shi'a community within Lebanon.¹⁰ The political mobilization of the Lebanese Shi'a began in earnest in the late 1960s upon the arrival of Imam Musa al Sadr, an Iranian Shi'a cleric, who led religiously based political protests in support of Lebanese Shi'a.¹¹ In 1974, al-Sadr formalized his "Movement of the Disinherited" into a political party that sought justice for the marginalized Lebanese Shi'a community.¹² For the first time since Lebanon's independence from France, the Shi'a population achieved meaningful unification under the banner of a combined religious and political organization.

The Lebanese Civil War began openly in 1975, this era in Lebanese history saw the emergence of a various armed ethnic groups fighting for increased local power, and precipitated an Israel invasion in 1982. The Arab League gave Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) permission to operate against Israel from Lebanese territory in 1969.¹³ The

⁹ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 49.

¹⁰ Norton, 14.

¹¹ Azani, 48.

¹² Judith Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 22.

¹³ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 34.

Lebanese Government at the time could not object to this violation of its sovereignty without further alienating other Arab states or exacerbating the brewing conflict between Muslims and Christians within its own borders.¹⁴ The introduction of an armed Sunni resistance movement into southern Lebanon caused the simultaneous expansion of militias within competing Christian and Shi'a ethnic groups. Within a year of its founding, the Movement of the Deprived also established an armed wing to protect Shi'a communities from rival religious militias within Lebanon.¹⁵ This militia, *afwaj al-muqawamat al-lubnaniyya* (AMAL), became the primary fighting force of the Lebanese Shi'a community during the initial stages of the Lebanese Civil War.¹⁶ Under the religious guidance of al-Sadr and the direct leadership of a Shi'a politician, Nabih Berri, AMAL negotiated and when necessary fought for control of Shi'a areas within Lebanon.¹⁷ However, one event would shatter the newfound Lebanese Shi'a unity and created the opportunity for a new, more powerful Shi'a organization. In 1978, the recognized religious leader of the Lebanese Shi'a, al-Sadr disappeared while visiting Libya under mysterious circumstances.¹⁸ The absence of al-Sadr's religious and moderating influence created a crisis for the future of the Lebanese Shi'a political movement. The perceptions of religiously fundamentalist members of AMAL saw al-Sadr's successor, Nabih Berri as much too secular and out of touch with traditional Shi'a beliefs.¹⁹ Berri's weak political response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon confirmed the

14 Ibid.

15 Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 22.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Norton, 21

19 Jaber, Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance, 53.

suspensions of AMAL's religious cadre, led by cleric Abbas al-Musawi, who broke from AMAL with the intention of founding a new holy path for resistance.²⁰ The disappearance of al-Sadr combined with the growing trend of secularism within AMAL sparked the creation of an Islamic fundamentalist response that became Hezbollah.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 created an exportable model for theocratic governance that the breakaway fundamentalist members of AMAL applied within Lebanon. The relationship between the emergent Islamic fundamentalists in Lebanon and Iranian clerics preceded the start of the Lebanese Civil War. In the 1950s, Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, formed and taught his theories regarding theocratic governance as a religious scholar in Najaf during his exile in Iraq.²¹ Foremost among his theories is the belief that divine law is the source of all earthly authority and that a leader of a legitimate political movement must possess prerequisite religious training.²² Two of his students put Khomeini's theories into practice in Lebanon: al-Sadr - who led the emerging Shi'a political movements and Mussawi - who broke away from the movement when it compromised its religious foundation. The Iranian Revolution supported the emergence of Hezbollah in Lebanon by providing the ideological basis for its beliefs and military and financial aid for resistance upon Israel's invasion in 1982.²³

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 20.

²² Azani, 40.

²³ Jaber, 20.

The Lebanese Civil War from 1982 to 1990 allowed Hezbollah an opportunity to gain local power through its application of terrorism against external actors and social services amongst its Shi'a constituents. The character of Hezbollah emerges during this period of extreme religious violence into what the current Secretary General, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, describes as the religiously astute seeing the light of God manifest itself within the context of the Civil War and Israeli invasion in 1982.²⁴ Hezbollah's manifestation of the "light of God" was a worldwide campaign of suicide attacks, airplane hijackings, and ambushes against the militaries and civilian populations of Israel and the West.²⁵ The spectacular nature of Hezbollah's terrorist activities during this period garnered the support of Shi'a Lebanese who saw the group as the most proactive protectors of their community. Hezbollah expanded its popularity by developing an expansive social service institution that tended to the physical needs of its Shi'a constituency.²⁶ Hezbollah evolved into more than a terrorist outfit when it began building hospitals and schools in the latter years of the civil war. Its militant and social victories led to the impression amongst the Lebanese Shi'a, and their families in diaspora communities around the globe, that Hezbollah is a legitimate alternative to the dysfunctional governmental system in Lebanon.

The election of Hezbollah political figures to the Lebanese Parliament in 1992 demonstrated its willingness and capability to appeal to a broader population and assume legitimate governance roles that continues into today. Following the Lebanese Civil War,

²⁴ Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah*, ed. Nicholas Noe and Nicholas Blanford (London: Verso, 2007), 127.

²⁵ Azani, 49.

²⁶ Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties, and Clerics* (London: Tauris Academy Studies, 2005), 116.

Hezbollah faced a crisis of identity within its own ranks regarding its involvement in the upcoming national elections and its perception amongst Sunni and Christian blocks over its terrorist history.²⁷ Two important events paved the way for Hezbollah's participation in the new Lebanese system, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and the expanding influence of Nasrallah within the organization.²⁸ The death of Khomeini and his slightly more moderate replacement in Iran reduced the influence of the hardline members of Hezbollah's religious council. Nasrallah used this opportunity to outline his future vision for Hezbollah, which continued the violent struggle against Israel while expanding the organization's capacity to provide aid to its core Shi'a constituency in Lebanon.²⁹ Nasrallah satisfied the religious identity of the group by promising a future Islamic State in Lebanon but it would entail voluntary submission to God's will and not the imposed control of man.³⁰ This deft maneuver, which Hezbollah maintains as its official policy today, appealed both to the religious and moderate supporters of the organization and resulted in a resounding political victory for the group. Hezbollah moderated the overt religious appearance it displayed upon its founding in order to appeal to all Lebanese, not just the Shi'a population.³¹ Hezbollah's transition into the Lebanese political arena enables support from internally from the Shi'a population it represents and garners support from the diaspora community who perceive it as legitimate.

²⁷ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 56.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 59.

³⁰ Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, trans. Dalia Khalil (London: Saqi, 2005), 30.

³¹ Robert Rabil, *Religion, National Identity, and Confessional Politics in Lebanon: The Challenge of Islamism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 67.

The primary authors on Hezbollah were members of the party themselves. They clearly describe the logic, purpose, history, and future of the organization from an inside perspective that explain Hezbollah's actions and counter the narrative of its enemies. These authors, including Mussawi, Nasrallah, and the current Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem, consistently portrayed Hezbollah in a positive light, which supported its agenda for future growth and legitimacy. These authors place special emphasis on the explanation for Hezbollah's transition from a religious militia to a legitimate government. This emphasis on transition allows the continuation of an authentic Islamic identity born during the Lebanese Civil War with the capacity for expanded appeal to all Lebanese and global supporters. Hezbollah's public statements from these authors highlight the party's role in political, social, and military spheres while downplaying its participation in criminal and terrorist activity.³² As Hezbollah's message and legitimacy grew within Lebanon and around the world, so did its presence on global media platforms. The development of internal radio and satellite television stations allowed the group to express its own ideas to a worldwide audience while disrupting the counter narrative of rivals.³³ The primary sources from Hezbollah present the group's ideals, supported by religious and cultural legitimacy, in a holistic manner that appeals to a global Shi'a support base who identify with the organization.

Western authors, beginning in the mid 1980's, continuing until today, analyze the foundations and actions of Hezbollah but focus on the organization within the context of specific events leading to a reductionist view of the group. Literature on Hezbollah from western secondary sources places emphasis on its terrorist capabilities that divorce the religious and

³² Levitt, 9.

³³ Dominique Avon and Anais-Trissa Khatchadourain, *Hezbollah: A History of the Party of God* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 64.

cultural logic of its goals from the ways it achieves them. Western authors such as Judith Harik, Matthew Levitt, and Augustus Norton analyze the religious foundation of Hezbollah in detail but tell very similar stories in all of their works. The preponderance of western authors frames Hezbollah's history as an armed religious movement striving to export the concepts of the Iranian Revolution to Lebanon.³⁴ This reductionist view of Hezbollah misses the religious and cultural nuances of the group. A deeper understanding of cultural and religious aspects of Hezbollah explains how the group developed a multi-dimensional identity while retaining an ideological logic. The different faces of Hezbollah resulted in enhanced legitimacy across a variety of populations that allowed them access to inclusive Lebanese politics, which is the true story of the organization.

Middle Eastern and Lebanese authors bridge the literature produced by the organization and prominent Western authors. These authors, including Hala Jaber, Eitan Azani, Robert Rabil, stress the cultural significance of the organization, which reinforces the narrative desired by Hezbollah. The Lebanese authors, through their experience framed by Middle Eastern culture, paint a much more nuanced picture of Hezbollah rather than the simplistic militia that grew a political wing narrative. Rabil and Azani specifically identify the cultural attributes of Lebanon that coupled with an understanding of Islam, explain the factors that allowed Hezbollah rapid growth and relevance amongst the global Shi'a population. Understanding the relevant narratives regarding Hezbollah amongst the regional authors prevent reducing the contributing causes of the organization into simple reductionist theories.

This monograph attempts to link the outside story of Hezbollah from the Western perspective with the internal Lebanese story of the organization. While it is not a complete

³⁴ Norton, 6.

explanation of Shi'a religious doctrine or Lebanese cultural history, this monograph threads religion and culture throughout Hezbollah's history to explain the legitimacy and influence the organization possesses today. By examining the applicable history of religion and culture, this monograph presents an explanation for Hezbollah and identifies specific characteristics that similar organizations use to transcend perceived limits to inter-state power.

The first section examines the foundation for Hezbollah's coherent logic proving that is stems from religion. Shi'a Islam provides the baseline history and structural tenets inherent to the creation and subsequent actions of Hezbollah. The history of Shi'a-ism—with stories of minority persecution and the struggle for survival—is the central theme in the organization's existence.³⁵ The narrative inherent to the persecution of Shi'a within Lebanon explains the deep connection Hezbollah has with Iran, the historical past that the party emerged out of, and the future goals it envisions necessary for its success. Hezbollah's religious identity transitions these concepts of historical persecution and the potential for a brighter future into a relevant and motivating call for action among the global Shi'a population. Hezbollah exploits the traditional tenets of Shi'a Islam—specifically *jihad* and *zakat* (alms)—to garner support for its cause.³⁶ Hezbollah offers a coherent and legitimate form of governance for the Lebanese Shi'a in support of its narrative. The concept of the jurist within an Islamic State provides the prerequisite leadership for Hezbollah and connects the larger concept of Shi'a-ism with the specific context inherent to Lebanon.³⁷ The

³⁵ Avon and Khatchadourian, *Hezbollah: A History of the Party of God*, 122.

³⁶ James B. Love, "Hezbollah: A Charitable Revolution" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2008), accessed January 15, 2015. <https://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a499513.pdf>, 2-4.

³⁷ Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah*, 32

findings of the first section suggest that Hezbollah's religious foundation is the basis for its purpose; an Islamic Resistance that provides its reason for being and connects its internal story with the external world.³⁸

The second section analyzes Lebanese culture and shows how it allowed the exportation of Hezbollah's ideology outside its homeland. This section examines the relevant cultural changes occurring within Lebanon during three distinct periods; post-colonial, civil war, and post-civil war. Post-colonial Lebanon defines the foundations of Lebanese clan or *zu'ama*, that shaped an environment in which the more powerful Sunni and Christian clans systematically oppressed the Shi'a.³⁹ This period saw massive migrations of Lebanese Shi'a into expatriate communities around the globe who still had ties back to their families back in Lebanon.⁴⁰ The Lebanese Civil War produced massive changes for the clan culture within Lebanon. The most important change during this period was the mass emigration of politically mobilized Lebanese Shi'a fleeing the violence of the civil war.⁴¹ The final section examines post-civil war Lebanon where Hezbollah merged the historic patronage of Lebanese culture with the unity inherent to the struggle of the civil war more effectively than its rivals combined and gained global support for its vision amongst the Lebanese diaspora communities. The financial support inherent to the cultural connection between diaspora communities and Lebanon contributes to the goals of the clans within Lebanon. Hezbollah's use of culture manifests itself in a variety of legal and illegal

³⁸ Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, trans. Dalia Khalil (London: Saqi, 2005), 69.

³⁹ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties, and Clerics*, 37.

⁴⁰ Chris Bierwirth, "The Lebanese Communities of Cote d'Ivoire," *African Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 390 (January 1999): pg 79-99, accessed January 4, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/723685>.

⁴¹ Norton, 14.

ways and means because of its exploitation of the culture of Lebanon. The findings in this section suggest that the Lebanese clan-based patronage system allowed Hezbollah to gain relevance amongst the Lebanese diaspora because of its shared cultural past which it exploited to ensure its future.

The third section completes the story using a case study of Hezbollah's involvement with the Lebanese diaspora community in West Africa. Beginning with an influx of Lebanese fleeing the persecution of the Shi'a community prior to the civil war, Hezbollah exploited the connection between Africa and Lebanon in the conduct of terrorist activities and fundraising on the continent. Hezbollah's relationship to the diaspora communities in Africa runs the gambit from donation solicitation through transnational crime to international terrorism. This relationship emerges out of the cultural and religious narratives fostered by the organization that Hezbollah exploits for its benefit. The findings from the case study show Hezbollah's relevance with the Lebanese Shi'a inside Lebanon gives the organization access and support from their families living abroad.

The conclusion asserts how Hezbollah's global influence emerges from its exploitation of Shi'a Islam and Lebanese culture. By constraining an organizational understanding of the group into the reductionist mantle of terrorism, the West misses the relevant causes of Hezbollah's continued appeal and power. This monograph explains why an organization from an impoverished region with a small population, such as Hezbollah, was able to translate religious and cultural relevance and exert international power making it legitimate in the eyes of its core constituents and regional and global nation-states.

Section 1: The Religious Foundation of Hezbollah

“We are now fighting together and falling as martyrs together.”⁴²

—Hassan Nasrallah

On September 13, 1997, an Israeli airstrike in southern Lebanon killed a civilian, two Hezbollah fighters, and six Lebanese soldiers. Among the slain was Hezbollah’s Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah’s 18-year-old son, Hadi. During his public address the next evening, Nasrallah thanked God for choosing a martyr from his family. Nasrallah said, “I used to feel ashamed in front of families with sons who died for their country, now I could look them in the eye.”⁴³ How does a father who loses a son in war make a statement as Nasrallah did after his own son’s death from an Israeli airstrike? The commitment to the Islamic Resistance, demonstrated by its Secretary General, demonstrates the power inherent to the firm religious beliefs by members of the organization.

Shi’a Islam is the logic that drives the form and function of Hezbollah. Qassem believes the overall success of the organization emerged because Hezbollah adopted the banner of Shi’a Islam as its defining principal.⁴⁴ Islam, as the foundational principal of the organization, sets Hezbollah apart from similar groups within Lebanon and allows for its broad appeal throughout Shi’a communities worldwide. Any analysis of the organization’s relationship to the Lebanese diaspora requires a discussion of how Shi’a Islam shapes Hezbollah’s image, goals, and motivations. This section examines the history of the Shi’a, the narrative of the Lebanese Shi’a, the tenets of Islam that drive Hezbollah, and its overall manifestation of Islam in the form of a

⁴² Annia Ciezadlo, “Beirut Dispatch,” *The New Republic*, August 7, 2006, accessed April 6, 2015, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/beirut-dispatch-3>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 9.

global Islamic Resistance. The characteristics of Shi'a Islam result in an inherent relationship between Hezbollah and Lebanese diaspora communities that it exploits in the pursuit of global support and relevance.

The story of Shi'a Islam defines Hezbollah's essence and explains its identity through the messages and actions of the organization. This branch of Islam provides a history and defines an ideal state of being, which Hezbollah exploits through all phases of its own evolution. The Shi'a sect of Islam emerged following the death of the Prophet Mohammed during the infighting amongst his followers over leadership of Islam that culminated in the massacre of Imam al-Husayn ibn Ali.⁴⁵ Al-Husayn knowingly faced a massacre in Karbala against illegitimate usurpers and was martyr for the defense of Islam.⁴⁶ The Imam's dignity and willingness to sacrifice in the face of certain death serves as a model for future generations of Shi'a. Future followers examine their sacrifices in comparison to al-Husayn and understand the importance of resistance with no hope for victory. He further connects the story of the Imam's sacrifice with a lesson for all Shi'a—realizing grand objectives requires sacrifice without the anticipation of compensation.⁴⁷ Hezbollah exploited historical images from the early history of Shi'a Islam. Its tradition of struggle in the face of terrible odds helps to explain the method of control that it uses as the basis for legitimacy. Hezbollah popularizes a history that expounds the virtue of religious inspired sacrifice for the goal of overcoming oppression to a population that perceives itself as

⁴⁵ Heinz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, trans. Allison Brown, Princeton Series on the Middle East (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 9.

⁴⁶ Qassem, 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

marginalized. This narrative frames the context for Hezbollah's position as the religiously legitimate protectors of the Shi'a community in Lebanon and throughout the world.

Hezbollah utilizes the history of al-Husayn and Shi'a Islam, with its devotion to the ideal of struggle and sacrifice to justify its legitimacy as the rightful, although oppressed, inheritors of Muhammed's vision for Islam. The etymology of words holds specific meaning for the organization. In Arabic, the word *Islam* translates to "obedience" while the word *Shi'a* translates to "follower."⁴⁸ This idea of an obedient follower underscores the inherent logic and explains the internal identity of Hezbollah. The founders of Hezbollah used the idea of an obedient follower, in the tradition of al-Husayn, to explain how they were different from other Shi'a. Nassrallah described the founding of Hezbollah as the religiously astute seeing the light of God manifest itself.⁴⁹ The religiously conscious Lebanese Shi'a saw the emergence of Hezbollah as a more pure path toward representation and appealed to the less religiously inclined segment of the population who recognized piety as a beneficial attribute of the group. Hezbollah's popular support, from its founding resulted from the party's effective connection between the histories of the Shi'a with the struggle of the modern day. Hezbollah's religious identity achieved a level of authenticity amongst the Lebanese Shi'a and provided further support through complimentary tenets of Islam.

The Islamic tenets of *zakat* and *jihad* feature prominently in Hezbollah's messaging and actions connecting the religious history of the Shi'a with the present. The practice of *zakat*—charity—and *jihad*—struggle—are deeply rooted in the traditions and practices of Islam. These

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Shi'ite Islam*, Persian Studies Series, vol. 5 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 33.

⁴⁹ Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah*, 127.

particular tenets fulfill the immediate necessity of support toward a particular cause but more importantly serve as a sign of solidarity amongst all Muslims everywhere.⁵⁰ By extolling the virtue of *zakat* and *jihad*, Hezbollah presented in itself an inclusive opportunity for all Shi'a who support Islam. Hezbollah's leaders, using their platform as legitimate religious within the community, equate *zakat* and *jihad* for the benefit of the organization as the religious obligation for all pious Shi'a.⁵¹ The religious tone of Hezbollah's message resulted in an outpouring of support for the organization by the Lebanese Shi'a who desired to walk on the same righteous path as the "Party of God." Hezbollah used its identity as the most legitimate religious organization in Lebanon to solidify the support of its constituents by surrendering their wealth with the giving of *zakat* or supporting the organization's militant goals with participation in *jihad*.

The financial support Hezbollah receives from *zakat* comes directly from the historical interpretation of the Koran and supports the narrative it builds as defenders of the oppressed Shi'a in Lebanon. The Koran states, "Feed those who need it, but do so especially when or where the sources of sustenance, physical, moral or spiritual are cut off."⁵² Hezbollah sees Lebanon as a front in the social welfare battlefield, where the marginalized Shi'a community desperately requires aid from domestic and international supporters. Hezbollah's belief in religious services—the provision of alms to the poor—causes the organization to fill the gap for this population thereby gaining legitimacy in Lebanon and abroad with the diaspora community. Because of its ability to generate charitable donations to the cause, Hezbollah is unique, compared to other

⁵⁰ Halm, Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution, 91.

⁵¹ Qassem, 27.

⁵² M A. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), v.6141.

institutions in Lebanon, with regard to the scope and range of public services that they operate.⁵³ From the Lebanese civil war until today, Hezbollah has provided timely, effective, and seemingly uncorrupt social services to the Shi'a community in the absence of legitimate state institutions.⁵⁴ These services require a level of organizational sophistication and information management that Hezbollah fostered from its founding. Hezbollah works toward achieving a social contract with its domestic constituents that provided for urgent needs and beneficial long-term programs.⁵⁵ Hezbollah established institutions, such as the Jihad al-Binaa Association, which supported Shi'a Lebanese and consciously advertised the party's contributions to society. These social institutions further its narrative as the benevolent patrons of an oppressed minority. The *zakat* received by Hezbollah supported programs that benefitted the Shi'a of Lebanon and when combined with an effective narrative generated more donations and expanded the legitimacy of Hezbollah's position as the providers for an oppressed population. *Zakat* is part of the religious narrative fostered by Hezbollah but it is only one part of the persona of the organization. Hezbollah's capacity for legitimacy within Lebanon emerges from its capability inherent in the combination of Islamic doctrine.

Closely related to *zakat* is the Islamic obligation of *jihad*. The religious concept of *jihad* espoused by Hezbollah refers to both the internal struggle for religious enlightenment and the external resistance against enemies of Islam.⁵⁶ Later sections will examine further Hezbollah's authority for declaring *jihad* but it is imperative at this point to describe how the organization

⁵³ Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 81.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Qassem, 83.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 34.

propagates its narrative with the concept of *jihad*. Hezbollah formed as a jihadist resistance group in opposition to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and in opposition to other Shi'a organizations who strayed from their religious foundations. Hezbollah's leaders espouse the importance of *jihad* as a pivotal sixth pillar of Islam, which allows man the promise of salvation through service to God.⁵⁷ *Jihad* is something that no Muslim can do without and furthermore it is the method for every true believer to participate in God's will in life. Hezbollah's interpretation of the concept of *jihad* applies both to internal struggle of the mind and the external fight against an enemy.⁵⁸ The concept of a combined internal and external struggle allowed Hezbollah's supporters a relevant religious identity in any act that contributed to the success of the organization. Hezbollah invites participation and provides an outlet for those who desire *jihad* as part of their life. Those who participate in *jihad*, through active or passive support of Hezbollah, will actively resist the forces of Israel and the West.⁵⁹ Hezbollah's acts of resistance and martyrdom toward Israel and against rival organizations serve as the ultimate models of *jihad*. By positioning themselves between perceived oppressors, Israel and the oppressed Shi'a of Lebanon, Hezbollah reaps the benefit of a historical identity that places the group at the forefront of religiously sanctioned struggle. This message of resistance contributes to Hezbollah's overall narrative, garnering support from a wide spectrum of sympathizers and resulting in the long-term legitimacy of the organization.

The historical and cultural context of the Shi'a in Lebanon created a specific environment that contributed to the emergence of Hezbollah during the Lebanese Civil War. Two important events laid the foundation for Hezbollah, the trend toward secularization of the Shi'a political movement following Musa al-Sadr and the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The combination of these

⁵⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁹ Norton, 38.

events provided an alternative model for conservative religious figures in the Lebanese Shi'a community to break from the newly established Shi'a political movement in Lebanon. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon was the tipping point for the religious fundamentalist to form a new organization that ultimately became Hezbollah.

The narrative of the Lebanese Shi'a portrayed the community as the most oppressed of all the minorities in the region. Even when the Lebanese Shi'a found some coherent political representation through the political mobilization of al-Sadr, the secularization of the movement by his heirs tainted his efforts. The betrayal of al-Sadr's religious vision proved too much for some of his religious leaders and the more pious Shi'a constituents. The rejection of secularism is a fundamental theme in Hezbollah's ideological development. The internal conflict with AMAL regarding the appropriateness of secularism helped birth Hezbollah and cemented it in its religious orientation as an organization. The loss of al-Sadr as the religious leader and the desire of some members to return to the Holy Law of Islam created tension between AMAL's focus on secular political relevance and religious identity that became a key point of division within the Lebanese Shi'a community.⁶⁰ The prominent religious members of AMAL, including Abbas al-Musawi, Subhia al-Tufayli, and Ibrahim Al-Amin, saw the absence of religion in politics and growing Shi'a unity as an opportunity to reform the future of Lebanon.⁶¹ The breakaway members' rejection of AMAL's secularism struck a chord within the Lebanese Shi'a community. The Shi'a community saw al-Sadr as the most legitimate figure because of his religious approach to Lebanese politics. The growing secularization of AMAL, and its proclivity for the type of politics which failed the Shi'a community in the past, presented an opportunity for this emergent

⁶⁰ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Perennial, 2003), 106.

⁶¹ Azani, 60.

group of clerics. The fracturing of the Lebanese Shi'a political landscape became fertile ground for the emergence of Hezbollah who portrayed themselves as the righteous defenders of the oppressed Shi'a minority.

The success of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 in overthrowing the Shah provided inspiration for the breakaway segment of AMAL to return to its religious roots while retaining the political power achieved during the initial stages of the Lebanese Civil War.⁶² The Islamic Revolution in Iran, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, reinvigorated the founders of Hezbollah in their pursuit of an Islamic State in Lebanon.⁶³ The nature of Hezbollah's stated goals during its foundation were pan-Shi'a in nature and reflect the interpretation of the Islamic State that started in Iran before the organization's founding. The early leaders of the Hezbollah, trained by Iranian clerics in *madrassas* in Karbala and Najaf, wanted to transform Lebanon from a divided, multi-religious state into a unified Iranian style Islamic country.⁶⁴ In return for the ideological alliance, Iran became a generous benefactor for Hezbollah in its early years because it was a chance to export the Islamic revolution to a new region and further unite the global Shi'a community.⁶⁵ Hezbollah became an organization committed to the development of an Islamic State that unifies the global Shi'a community because of its adoption of traditional Shi'a Islamic principles and the ideological influence from Iran.

A defining characteristic of Hezbollah, from its founding until the modern day, is its adherence to religious leadership through the Islamic concept of *wali al-faqih* or a Supreme

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Nasrallah, Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, 32

⁶⁴ Jaber, 48.

⁶⁵ Halm, 160.

Islamic Jurist.⁶⁶ The founders and current leaders of Hezbollah are not soldiers or administrators but rather clerics who provide the organization's religious authenticity. An understanding of Hezbollah's ideological form and hierarchy is an important component of what makes the organization unique. The Islamic concept of the Jurist enables the key link between the all-encompassing teachings of Islam with the specific context of Lebanese Shi'a. The Imams provided the mechanism for retaining the Lebanese Shi'a identity with the promise of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

Hezbollah's interpretation of Shi'a Islam defines an Islamic Jurist as an authoritarian religious leader who commands the faithful and requires obedience among his followers.⁶⁷ The principal of Islamic Jurist within Shi'a Islam allows a recognized Imam to serve as a proxy for the missing twelfth Imam and to adjudicate Sharia law on earth.⁶⁸ The twelfth Imam is part of a Shi'a apocalyptic prophecy whose return will herald the end of time on earth.⁶⁹ However, before that event occurs, the Jurist serves as an infallible interpreter of religious law who outlines the correct path for Shi'a to follow.⁷⁰ Hezbollah's adherence to the concept of the jurist as the political and spiritual leader of its organization allows for religiously sanctioned unity of command within Lebanon and around the world.

Hezbollah believes that its implementation of religious authority, through the concept of an Islamic Jurist, is a key component for a creation of an Islamic state that transcends the borders

⁶⁶ Jaber, 71.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 16.

⁶⁹ Shanahan, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

of Lebanon and rules in accordance with Sharia law. The leaders of Hezbollah since their foundation consistently espouse their belief that the future of Lebanon includes the adaption of their vision of a unified Islamic state for the country.⁷¹ Where rival groups like AMAL saw the need to reform Lebanon from within through secularist means, Hezbollah advocated for internal religious reforms in Lebanon that would launch other religious revivals and change the current international system in pursuit of a Islamic state.⁷² The use of religious Imams as leaders made Hezbollah a transnational organization from its very inception. From its first Secretary General, Abbas al-Musawi, to the current leader, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah places the responsibility for leadership upon the Imams in order to solve the secular challenges they face with religious solutions authorized by the jurist they view as divinely legitimate.

Hezbollah uses the authority of recognized jurists throughout its history to maintain its standing as the legitimate representative of the Lebanese Shi'a. Different Shi'a leaders throughout the recent history of Lebanon have all influenced how Hezbollah sees itself internally and portrays itself externally. While the different leaders have to contend with the realities of their time, Hezbollah's organizational goal of an Islamic State remained constant throughout its history. The evolution of Hezbollah leaders and sponsors, from foundational figures like al-Sadr and Khomeini to operational leaders like Musawi and Nasrallah, reflect in the different priorities and methods of the organization.

Musa al-Sadr, an Iranian Imam of Lebanese descent was responsible for the political mobilization of the Lebanese Shi'a that overcame the oppression of pre-civil war Lebanon. Al-

⁷¹ Qassem, 31.

⁷² Azani, 63.

Sadr arrived in Lebanon in 1967 with the political backing of Hafez al Assad, former leader of Syria, and of religious patronage from Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran.⁷³ His purpose was to organize and focus the Shi'a minority in the political arena and provide a voice for an oppressed community of people under the Maronite and Sunni dominated government of Lebanon. His religious authority provided a unifying political, social, and militant force representative of the Lebanese Shi'a. This newfound unity amongst the Lebanese Shi'a created a legitimate institutional identity throughout the country and amongst the Lebanese diaspora. Al-Sadr's disappearance created a power vacuum and opened the way for new leaders who lacked the religious authenticity that allowed the Movement of the Deprived to drift toward secularism during the Lebanese Civil War.

Ayatollah Khomeini's religious teachings led to the Islamic Revolution in Iran and his subsequent strategy of exporting the revolution provided the ideological foundation for his students who transferred that model to Lebanon. Khomeini is the most important Islamic Jurist in Hezbollah's history because he provided the organization with its goals and underlying form.⁷⁴ Khomeini shaped Hezbollah's religious vision, exported the sentiment of Islamic Revolution from Iran to Lebanon, and instilled in the group a vision for an Islamic State that would oppose the forces of Israel and the West. Hezbollah's pursuit of an Islamic State, based on Sharia law under the guidance of a recognize Jurist, is the ultimate purpose of its struggle within Lebanon and comes directly from Khomeini.⁷⁵

⁷³ Jaber, 11.

⁷⁴ Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 15.

⁷⁵ Qassem, 31.

Abbas al-Musawi, a former student of Khomeini and the principal cleric that led the break with AMAL became the first Secretary General of Hezbollah. His leadership of the organization extolled the virtues of strict Islamic teachings and shaped Hezbollah's violent opposition to Israel and the West.⁷⁶ Al-Musawi outlined three goals for Hezbollah at its inception: the expulsion of all foreigners from Lebanon, the liberation of Jerusalem, and the establishment of an Islamic State in Lebanon – these goals remains the ultimate aim of the organization today.⁷⁷ His influence as a recognized jurist manifested in the terrorist action of Hezbollah during the Lebanese Civil War and the Islamic Resistance that it pursues today. Under the leadership of Al-Musawi, Hezbollah pursued a campaign of terrorism coupled with social service activity gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the Lebanese Shi'a at home and in diaspora communities. His death, from an Israeli airstrike in 1992, set the stage for the next evolution in Hezbollah's purpose and strategy.⁷⁸

Hassan Nasrallah is the jurist who balanced the foundational ideals of Hezbollah with its core Shi'a constituency and broadened its appeal to greater segments of the Lebanese population. Nasrallah identified the two most important goals that held the key for the organization's relevance, continuing the resistance to Israel and fighting Shi'a discrimination.⁷⁹ Over time, Hezbollah's pursuit of these goals gained the organization regional influence that translated into international diplomatic, information, military, and economic power. It gained monetary and political support from a variety of benefactors by leveraging its traditional image as pious

⁷⁶ Azani, 61.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 93.

protectors of the Shi'a population and the Lebanese state.⁸⁰ Hezbollah's international influence continues to expand because Nasrallah maintained the organization's religious identity in conjunction with effective representation of domestic constituents.

The combination of Islamic doctrine and Lebanese cultural legacy under the direction of a recognized Jurist leader results in the concept of an Islamic Resistance to Israel and the West. Islamic Resistance is the ultimate output of Hezbollah's religious system. These elements provide justification and meaning to the organization's continuous militant opposition in Southern Lebanon and terrorist activities globally.⁸¹ Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance, with its religious foundation, identifies three important characteristics of the organization, its identity through defining what it is not, religious authenticity, and continued relevance. By declaring itself the enemy of Israel and the West, Hezbollah defines itself through opposition to its external enemy's doctrine of Zionism and colonialism. The Islamic Resistance offers a sanctioned religious path, through struggle, for the Lebanese Shi'a resulting in future salvation for the oppressed population. Hezbollah's message regarding the perceived persecution of Islam in general and Lebanese Shi'a specifically makes the Islamic Resistance a long-term strategy that ensures relevance among sympathetic populations that accept its narrative. Hezbollah's rejection of the previous Lebanese political structure and Israeli attempt to shape the future of the country established a new potential for Shi'a to shape their own future. Hezbollah's adherence for a militant Islamic Resistance to Israel and its supporters became the primary method in which they express the party's commitment to Islam and the Shi'a community.

⁸⁰ Levitt, 8.

⁸¹ Ibid, 11.

The Islamic Resistance identifies an external enemy—Israel and the West, primarily the United States—for the Lebanese Shi’a. The Islamic Resistance provides Hezbollah with a critical reason for being by giving the organization internal coherence through the presence of an external threat. The organization consistently and repeatedly describes Israel and the West as its enemies and claims they are responsible for the disadvantages faced by Shi’a in Lebanon. Hezbollah, through the statements of Nasrallah, describes Israel as, “an illegal and usurper entity built on false pretenses, on massacres, and on delusions, and has therefore no chance for survival.”⁸² Hezbollah believes that the Western nations, especially the United States, are complicit in the creation of Israel and are responsible for its continued existence.⁸³ This clear identification and indictment of its enemies allows Hezbollah a focal point against which it directs all of the facets of its organizational support and energy. The use of an Islamic Resistance incorporates the dialectic of violence enabled by social and religious activities. This dialectic built its reputation and legitimacy resulting in Hezbollah’s emergence from the Lebanese Civil War as the preeminent Shi’a political party in the region.⁸⁴ By defining an external enemy, Hezbollah can clearly articulate what it is and what it represents.

The Islamic Resistance offers a path of salvation for all Lebanese Shi’a no matter their station in life. This resistance against Israel and the West, informed by historical events and religious teachings, is Hezbollah’s *raison d’être* and is a central theme in its messages. It offers the vehicle for Shi’a liberation from oppression and the ultimate realization of the organization’s

⁸² Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah*, 206.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁴ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 81.

goals. The conduct of the Islamic Resistance thus requires a full investment of support, spiritually and physically, by the organization and its supporters.⁸⁵ The leaders of Hezbollah connect the concept of armed resistance closely with the religious history of the Shi'a and traditional Islamic doctrine. Qassem describes the spiritual foundation of resistance by stating, "experience has proven that spiritual mobilization is a foundation for additional power that comes to aid at the time of battle irrespective of the modesty of military equipment available, and any military might may fall prey to self-defeat and dejection during enemy confrontation."⁸⁶ This statement demonstrates Hezbollah's belief that the conflict with Israel is in accordance with traditional Islamic teachings of *jihad*, in which the internal struggle for one's soul took primacy over a fight in external combat. Hezbollah's concept of Islamic Resistance not only satisfies internal strife but also describes the organization's external strategy and goals against its enemies. Nasrallah describes Islamic Resistance as,

The long-term strategy is clear and does not require additional explanation. It involves fighting against Israel and liberating Jerusalem, as well as Imam Khomeini's proposal, ending Israel as a state. We view the Israeli enemy with a different eye, that its very existence in the region poses a constant threat to Lebanon as a whole, even if it withdraws from the frontier zone.⁸⁷

Nasrallah's and Qassem's descriptions of the internal and external struggle combine to inform the overall strategy and goals for the Islamic Resistance of Hezbollah. The resistance is an existential fight that requires sacrifice in order to achieve liberation for the mind, body, and spirit of the Shi'a they represent. The war waged by Hezbollah through resistance does not have physical or mental boundaries and requires the support of its supporters wherever they may be and in whatever fashion they can provide. The very act of resistance toward Israel and the West is

⁸⁵ Qassem, 69.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Nasrallah, Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, 63.

a victory for the organization and its supporters. Hezbollah presents its tactical defeats and deaths of its members as legitimate martyrdom that only propagate Hezbollah's narrative justifying the struggle inherent to Islamic Resistance. The Islamic Resistance ties the religious tenets of *jihad* and *zakat* under the direction of a legitimate Jurist and in a relevant manner developing a conflict in which every Shi'a can and should participate.

The Islamic Resistance ensures the continued relevance of Hezbollah as long as Israel and the West exist. Violence against Israel and the West in the name of Islam garners support among a wide spectrum of audiences in Lebanon because of its appeal along ideological, religious, and military lines. Hezbollah made alliances with nation states, non-governmental organizations, and private individuals in order to realize its goal of defeating Israel and empowering the Shi'a community in Lebanon.⁸⁸ The party's first partners, which allowed Hezbollah to coalesce into a distinct and effective organization, were the countries of Iran and Syria. Iran, as previously noted, saw the religious foundation of Hezbollah as an opportunity to export its version of the Shi'a Islamic revolution into Lebanon. Nasrallah claims that Iran's support of Hezbollah and the Islamic Resistance emerged, "not on the basis of regional interests but on the basis of the mentality, ideology, and special structure of our [Hezbollah's] clerics and references, which pre-dated the founding of the Islamic regime of Iran, as it already been in existence in Najaf and elsewhere."⁸⁹ The ideological goals of Hezbollah coincide with Iranian goals because the founders of the organization were influenced by the same Shi'a clerics that helped spur the revolution in Iran in 1979. This ideological relationship prompted Iran to provide

⁸⁸ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 3.

⁸⁹ Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah*, 110.

political, military, and monetary support to Hezbollah from its inception until the present day. Without Iran's support, it is unlikely that Hezbollah could have emerged as the influential organization that it is today. The discrete source of support for the Islamic resistance comes from private individuals and non-governmental entities.⁹⁰ Private donations from campaigns tied to *zakat* giving generate consistent support for the organization that is disparate from the fluctuations inherent to the political will of a particular nation state. With Hezbollah's social services, financial, and governance apparatus in the region, a portion of this external monetary support without a doubt funds its Islamic Resistance against Israel. This money is often routed through the social services institutions Hezbollah operates which helps shield it from international efforts to block the funding of terrorism. Hezbollah's long-term policy of Islamic Resistance ensures it will maintain the benefit from the support from individuals, organizations, and nations that identify with its goals. The Islamic Resistance is the logical form for Hezbollah messages and actions because of its religious foundation and its pursuit of victory in the struggle for Shi'a legitimacy in Lebanon.

The study of Islam gives insight into the logic, form, and function that provides Hezbollah with continued relevance and appeal. The findings in this section suggest that the religious characteristics of Hezbollah give the organization global support and legitimacy amongst populations with similar identities. Hezbollah, as an organization, derives its vision and structure from traditional teachings of Islam influenced through Shi'a clerics who brought these lessons to Lebanon. Hezbollah's narrative that it is the legitimate defender of the Lebanese Shi'a emerges from Islamic history, traditional Islamic tenets, and recognized jurist authority figures. The manifestation of the combination of history, doctrine, and leadership is the Islamic

⁹⁰ Norton, 108.

Resistance toward Israel and the West. The Islamic Resistance is the defining characteristic of the organization because it presents a coherent story, grounded in the past and promising a hopeful future, for the Lebanese Shi'a. The common thread throughout Hezbollah's actions and messages is Shi'a Islam. Religion provides the underlying logic to the form and capabilities exhibited by Hezbollah. Islam, as personified by Hezbollah throughout its existence, is more than a religious practice; it is a complete system of control that orders the lives of its followers. However, several Islamic groups with similar ideologies rose and fell in the same period without nearly the success achieved by Hezbollah as this organization has the added component of Lebanese culture. The close clan and family relations inherent to Lebanon, combined with the ideological foundation of Islam, allowed Hezbollah to emerge and thrive across the globe within just a few decades.

Section 2: Hezbollah and the Diaspora through Lebanese Cultural Attributes

A counter-narcotics operation in 2008, led by the US Government in Columbia, arrested several Lebanese citizens affiliated with Hezbollah resulting in the seizure of over \$23 million in cash.⁹¹ The presence of such a large amount of money in a single drug deal clearly indicates the depth of Hezbollah's overseas presence within the secretive world of narcotics trafficking. Hezbollah's involvement in the drug trade far from its homeland requires the willing support of Lebanese citizens living abroad toward the organization's mission in Lebanon. Building on the religious foundation of Islam, the Lebanese culture creates another worldwide unifying identity that Hezbollah exploits in support of its operations. This section explains how Hezbollah, operating on the other side of the globe from its homeland in Lebanon, can extend its presence through the cultural attributes of Lebanon through which it derives diverse sources of financial and political power.

⁹¹ Levitt, 105.

While Islam is the logic that guides Hezbollah's messages and actions, Lebanese culture is the vehicle for its international expansion. Lebanon's history as a nation state, comprised of multiple ethnicities and religious groups, created unique cultural attributes that contribute to Hezbollah's influence within diaspora groups. While religion is an obviously unifying aspect of Lebanese culture, the societal structure inherent to Lebanese culture also greatly contributed to the expansion of Hezbollah over the last thirty-three years.

The Lebanese clan based society, *zu'ama*, went through evolutions that Hezbollah recognized and exploited for its benefits at home in Lebanon and abroad in the diaspora communities. The development of a society based around the formation of clans placed emphasis on familial loyalty and resulted in a culture predicated around clientilism and patronage.⁹² The pervasive clan relationships within Lebanese culture survived the post-colonial era, the Lebanese Civil War, and remained intact until today. Clan relationships, a hierarchal structure based upon patronage and support, became increasingly important to Hezbollah's legitimacy as the organization developed. Hezbollah acquired financial support from the Lebanese diaspora through a host of service-based organizations that it converted into political power and legitimacy within Lebanon.⁹³ In addition to its sponsorship of social services, Hezbollah utilized the clan relationship in support of its criminal and terrorist operations overseas.⁹⁴ The organizational model used by Hezbollah, grounded in Shi'a Islam and the *zu'ama*, allows the organization to exist as many different entities simultaneously even when its goals and messages seem to be at odds with one another. This section examines the cultural characteristics of the Lebanese Shi'a

⁹² Shanahan, 37.

⁹³ Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 82.

⁹⁴ Levitt, 10.

from the post-colonial era until today that allowed Hezbollah influence amongst the diaspora, which they cultivated into continued economic and political support.

The Lebanese cultural concept of *zu'ama* predated the founding of Hezbollah and served as a method to gather influence and patronage amongst the Shi'a population. The *zu'ama* is the oldest form of political and social organization in Lebanese culture and reflects the common clan based society characteristic of the wider Arab region.⁹⁵ The concept of a clan-based system, with its deeply embedded social customs, still permeates throughout Lebanese culture, whether in Lebanon or abroad. The traditional leader of the clan, called a *za'im* established the conditions for his influence by creating a support base through two means: by owning and leasing land or by operating businesses that earned the loyalty of his workers.⁹⁶ This traditional exchange of loyalty and support for patronage is another important characteristic of Lebanese culture, which Hezbollah eventually adopted in its influence within diaspora communities. Inheritance and familial relationships determined the clan's hierarchy and passed the power of the *za'im* from one generation to the next.⁹⁷ The restriction of power to specific families and clans contributed to social unrest in Lebanon as the Shi'a communities mobilized politically in the mid-20th century. Hezbollah's emergence during the Lebanese Civil War is due in part to its ability to use the cultural clan system of Lebanon to garner economic and political support thereby gaining legitimacy.

The pre-Civil War Lebanese *Zu'ama* used patronage to ensure local control of the Shi'a but allowed the overall oppression of the Shi'a communities within Lebanon by more powerful Christian and Sunni clans. The collapse of the existing *zu'ama* order in Lebanon during the civil

⁹⁵ Shanahan, 37.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁹⁷ Azani, 49.

war produced an environment in which emergent organizations like Hezbollah gained power. The competing ethnic groups within Lebanon wielded power for generations using similar patronage based clan systems prior to the social unrest during the 1970s. Since Lebanon's independence from France in 1943, the defining characteristic of Lebanese politics was the compromise between Sunni Muslims and Christian Maronite clans in a power sharing arrangement.⁹⁸ The prominent influence of these two ethnic group concentrated political and economic power within their communities, which relegated the Shi'a in southern Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley to second-class citizens status. The marginalization of the Shi'a *zu'ama* caused the mass emigration of families from Lebanon to various regions of the world who still identified with the clan relationships in Lebanon.⁹⁹

One of the primary catalysts for the Lebanese Civil War was the mobilization of competing Shi'a groups into a unified block that fought for regional power within the country. The breakdown of the traditional Sunni and Christian *zu'ama* in Lebanon allowed Hezbollah to emerge as a viable patron for the Shi'a community. The rise of Shi'a political mobilization in the 1970s, with its religious sentiment influenced by Imams such as Musa Sadr, put pressure for social reforms on the existing Lebanese government dominated by Sunni and Christian sects.¹⁰⁰ The bitter grievances between religious factions along with Palestinian and Israeli violence in Southern Lebanon sparked the Lebanese Civil War. The war, with its competing militias and international influence from Israel, Syria, and Iran created instability in the region out of which

⁹⁸ Norton, 11.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁰ Jaber, 11.

Hezbollah emerged. During its initial formation, Hezbollah believed the existing Shi'a political movements, such as AMAL, strayed too far from the original religious base and thus lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the Shi'a *zu'ama*. Combined with the patronage of Iran following the Islamic Revolution and the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982, Hezbollah became the new face of Shi'a political organization still tied to its religious foundation with the capability for resistance against the invaders.¹⁰¹ Even though its foundation was as a religious militia, Hezbollah quickly built a complimentary social service apparatus that supported the local Shi'a community and thus gained them the support of the Shi'a *zu'ama* within Lebanon and within diaspora communities worldwide. Shi'a political mobilization, under leaders like Musa al-Sadr, developed institutions that unified the population internally and gained legitimacy to the diaspora Lebanese population externally that Hezbollah incorporated into its operating construct.

Hezbollah combined the historic patronage of Lebanese culture with the unity inherent to the struggle of the civil war more effectively than its rivals and gained global support for its vision amongst the Lebanese diaspora communities. The two key aspects that enabled Hezbollah ascendance amongst the Shi'a *zu'ama* was the perceived illegitimacy of AMAL because of its secular politics and the organization's adherence to Iranian doctrine of exporting the Islamic Revolution. Hezbollah bested AMAL amongst the Lebanese Shi'a because of its responsive handling of social services in the region, violent opposition to Israel, and AMAL's perception of corruption.¹⁰² Hezbollah's perceived integrity from religious authority proved much more attractive to the Shi'a *zu'ama* in Lebanon and that sentiment passed unto the family members living abroad. This tangible legitimacy gained through social service and violent resistance within

¹⁰¹ Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah*, 406.

¹⁰² Norton, 45.

Lebanon earned Hezbollah respect within the Shi'a families at home. Their relatives overseas saw Hezbollah as the most legitimate Shi'a movement in Lebanon, which allowed the expansion of Hezbollah's influence in the diaspora communities abroad. Hezbollah's ideological foundation in the Islamic Revolution caused it perception of the struggle within Lebanese Shi'a community as part of a global problem affecting Muslims everywhere.¹⁰³ This concept of a worldwide fight for representation and community held immediate relevance with the Lebanese diaspora throughout the globe. The diaspora, often victims to their own persecution and marginalization, felt an immediate sense of connection to Hezbollah, which it converted into tangible forms of support. Iran saw Lebanon as the first success in exporting its Islamic Revolution that Hezbollah then in turn exported through Lebanese culture to the diaspora residing outside of their homeland. Hezbollah emerged during the Lebanese Civil War with an ideological will, through the exportation of Islamic Revolution, and a practical way, diaspora support of an organization caring for their families, of supporting the organization financially from communities outside Lebanon.

Hezbollah translated the support derived from Lebanese culture into a host of financial sources from which it funds its operations. Hezbollah legitimacy within the Shi'a *zu'ama* in Lebanon produced close economic ties between expatriate diaspora communities and the organization. The Lebanese Civil War produced an environment where similar organizations competed for popular and thus financial support from the Shi'a *zu'ama*. Hezbollah emerged as the predominant Shi'a organization in the eyes of the Shi'a diaspora because of its careful nurturing of the pious image of the party and its commitment to the resistance against Israel and the West. With the legitimacy gained through the effective employment of social services and violence, Hezbollah reaped the reward of support from a diverse economic base. Financial

¹⁰³ Jaber, 54.

support for Hezbollah from outside Lebanon manifested in a variety of overt and covert ways that eventually became an essential source of fundraising for the organization. Hezbollah today continues to receive money from three important and complimentary sources: legal donations to its social service committees, and illegal involvement in criminal and terrorist organizations, and state sponsors.¹⁰⁴ These multiple sources of financial support are flexible, effective, and inherent to Islamic doctrine, which reflect the overall aesthetic of the organization and make them very difficult to disrupt.

The intersection of culture and religion enables Hezbollah's ability to leverage donations from the diaspora Lebanese Shi'a population. The Lebanese diaspora communities close cultural connection with their families, based upon the clan relationships inherent with the *zu'ama* system, predicated certain financial responsibilities.¹⁰⁵ Members of the diaspora desired to support the most effective organization within Lebanon who could assist their relatives in the homeland through social service programs. Hezbollah's religious identity gave the organization a reputation of incorruptibility that appealed to the diaspora who did not want their money squandered. Hezbollah's actions through the Islamic Resistance against Israel and its effective management of social programs immediately appealed to the diaspora who in turn supported the organization financially.

¹⁰⁴ Norton, 110

¹⁰⁵ Guita Hourani, "Lebanese Diaspora and Homeland Relations," National Defense University, October 23, 2007, accessed December 11, 2014, <http://www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc/publications/Lebanese%20Diaspora%20and%20Homeland%20Relations.pdf>

Zakat or alms giving are a religious practice sanctioned by Hezbollah's clerical leadership that helps fund the organization's activities. Hezbollah created several social service institutions that collect donations from the diaspora and applies those monies to projects that benefit the Shi'a within Lebanon. These programs also retain the donors' interest in the Lebanese homeland. The Iranian Revolution provided a model for Hezbollah regarding the employment and utility of social programs, which further generated support from the Shi'a *zu'ama* in Lebanon. Hezbollah founded the Jihad al-Binaa, or the Reconstruction Campaign, in 1988, which rebuilt homes, schools, and waste management facilities in areas devastated by the fighting.¹⁰⁶ The popularity of the Reconstruction Campaign sprouted similar social services organization under the umbrella of Hezbollah. The party began the Islamic Health Organization and the Philanthropic and Social Martyrs Institution to address the health care issues of sick and wounded within the Shi'a communities in Lebanon.¹⁰⁷ In 1989, Hezbollah founded the Support Association of the Islamic Resistance, which encouraged financial donations from supporters within Lebanon and in Shi'a communities worldwide.¹⁰⁸ The Support Association collected funds in the form of *zakat* at mosques, schools, commerce institutions, and private events within the Shi'a diaspora communities in support of the entire spectrum of Hezbollah's activities. These donations, received through the traditional manner of *zakat* giving, allowed Hezbollah to fund its subordinate militant and social service entities while appearing as benign religious tithing.

¹⁰⁶ Judith Harik, "Hizballah's Public and Social Services and Iran," in *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris & Co., 2006), 273.

¹⁰⁷ Qassem, 85.

¹⁰⁸ "Funding Terrorism: Hezbollah Uses Its Websites to Collect Donations for Itself and for Its Affiliated Institutions in Lebanon and Elsewhere in the World," The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, May 26, 2008, accessed October 15, 2014, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_08_120_2.pdf.

Hezbollah, incorporating its Islamic doctrine of charitable works, emerged as a generous benefactor for the disadvantaged Shi'a community, which generated future recruitment and legitimacy in a region where no other organization could do so as effectively. Hezbollah's social service model, based on the tenets of Islam and using Iran as the initial example, allowed the group continued legitimacy and support amongst the local *zu'ama* and Lebanese Shi'a diaspora communities. Hezbollah's effective use of donated money combined with the organization's pious perception reinforced the organization's legitimacy in the eyes of the diaspora.

A cultural practice ingrained within Lebanese diaspora communities is the sending of remittances to Lebanon from abroad. A consistent path for success for Lebanese Shi'a families remains emigration abroad in the pursuit of financial opportunity while providing monetary support for their families at home in Lebanon.¹⁰⁹ The return of remittances currently make up to twenty percent of Lebanon's GDP and are vital for the financial well-being of the families of Shi'a living in Lebanon.¹¹⁰ With Hezbollah's perception of legitimacy among the Shi'a at home, their families generously provide directly to the organization as the most trusted method of support. Hezbollah serves as the vehicle for sending remittances from the diaspora community and leverages that consistent source of financial aid against all of its activities.

The support from the diaspora, gained through the legitimacy of Hezbollah, necessitated the creation of Sharia compliant financial institutions to manage the outpouring of wealth into the organization. Sharia compliant financing entails the use of legitimate Islamic scholars to sanction

¹⁰⁹ Norton, 1.

¹¹⁰ Dilip Ratha, "Migration and Remittances in Lebanon," The World Bank, November 8, 2010, accessed January 19, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/lebanon>.

the transfer of money or assets and fit in Hezbollah's function as the legitimate representative of Lebanese Shi'a and its international supporters.¹¹¹ Within Lebanon, Hezbollah operates several legitimate banking institutions under the banner of *Beit al-Mal*. These banks, whose translation means "House of Wealth," possess international recognition and legitimacy that allows the organization to transfer the donations generated by the Support Association into Lebanon.¹¹² The dollar amount generated by Hezbollah in this manner is notoriously difficult to ascertain. However, figures of Hezbollah's loan expenditure program in Lebanon exceeded \$4.5 million dollars in 2001 alone.¹¹³ The party's ability to generate money from private donations without question exceeds millions of dollars annually and is likely in the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. Hezbollah's solicitation of seemingly humanitarian donations through religiously sanctioned finance houses allows the organization to maintain diversity in its support base. This diversity in religiously and culturally sanctioned finances is combined with another form of revenue which requires the support of the Shi'a *zu'ama* abroad, the financial benefits associated with connections to criminal organizations.

Hezbollah's presence in international diaspora communities provides the organization with access to criminal enterprises that it then uses to supplement its financial income. The relationship and support from the *zu'ama* provides the organization access to organized crime elements within diaspora communities outside of Lebanon. Throughout the 1980s, Hezbollah

¹¹¹ Robin Wigglesworth, "Loans for Raising: Islamic Finance," Vision: Fresh Perspectives for Dubai, March 2014, accessed March 16, 2015, http://vision.ae/focus/loans_for_raising_islamic_finance.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 92.

developed a presence in South American Lebanese communities that expanded its access to criminal networks. Hezbollah became an international criminal organization with an involvement in a host of crimes including narcotics trafficking, weapons trading, money laundering, and forgery of products and intellectual property.¹¹⁴ The porous tri-border region between Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina, with its significant Lebanese expatriate community, became a hub for Hezbollah in South America. Access to this area facilitated Hezbollah partnership with South American criminal cartels and provided a support zone for its burgeoning involvement in drugs and terrorist activity against targets in the region.¹¹⁵ The financial benefit of criminal activities is another difficult figure to calculate using published information. Anti-narcotics arrests by the US Government in 2008 of known Columbian cartel members and Lebanese affiliated Hezbollah agents resulted in the seizure of over \$23 million in cash.¹¹⁶ It is unknown how much money changed hands between Hezbollah and the drug cartels in previous interactions. However, the generation of this much money in a single operation clearly indicates the willing support of Lebanese citizens living abroad and the long-term relationship between the organization and criminal networks. Hezbollah's fundraising for all of its activities in Lebanon, regardless whether they are militant or social in nature, have a connection to the organization's involvement in crime committed abroad. The criminal aspect of Hezbollah gives the organization a source of financial support seemingly at odds with its stated principals; however, the goals of an Islamic Resistance

¹¹⁴ Levitt, 104.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 105.

transcend the immorality of criminal activity that generate the necessary support among the Lebanese *zu'ama* which justifies its participation in these endeavors.

Hezbollah's legitimacy as the representatives of the Lebanese Shi'a allows the organization the support from state actors in the region. Iran and Syria, connected to Hezbollah through religion and culture, provided vast sums of financial and political support to the organization reinforcing its legitimacy at home and abroad. The original linkage between Iran and Hezbollah provided the earliest and most important stream of financial support for the organization. As this research has indicated, the ideological connection along religious lines enabled Iran to serve as the primary international sponsor of Hezbollah, which gave them the financial base to grow during the Lebanese Civil War.¹¹⁷ Norton estimates that Hezbollah received over \$100 million a year from the Iranian government in the form of weapons, training, and cash for its activities within Lebanon and abroad against Israel and the West.¹¹⁸ This generous backing facilitated Hezbollah's rapid growth and ensured its continued relevance within Lebanon and among the diaspora communities worldwide. Without Iranian backing for its social programs in addition to its Islamic Resistance activities, it is doubtful that Hezbollah's emergence in the face of internal Shi'a competition and opposing religious sects would have succeeded. The relationship between Hezbollah and Syria is much more divisive than its relationship with Iran. Syrian President Hafiz Assad was apprehensive about supporting a fundamentalist movement so close to his borders during the Lebanese Civil War in fear that it might undermine his control in the region.¹¹⁹ Following the end of the civil war, Syrian opposition reached an equilibrium with Hezbollah because of its focus on the Islamic Resistance toward Israel. The Syrian balance with Hezbollah ensured that Iran had continued access in the region to fund and equip its proxy against Israel and the West. Hezbollah's support from nation states, combined with religiously sanctioned donations and involvement with criminal networks results in a diverse financial support base for the organization's activities.

Hezbollah's legitimacy, derived through the cultural characteristics of Lebanon, ensure that wherever there is a Lebanese diaspora community, Hezbollah is there as well. The cultural characteristics of Lebanon, with its clan-based hierarchy and support structure, provide a dynamic and durable connection between Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shi'a diaspora. This connection between the organization and its support base ensures a diverse and near constant flow of economic support from multiple sources, political sympathy from foreign nations, and

¹¹⁷ Harik, "Hizballah's Public and Social Services and Iran," 259.

¹¹⁸ Norton, 110.

¹¹⁹ Harik, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, 38.

international legitimacy from allies and opponents. Hezbollah emerged as an international power player because they seized the opportunity to differentiate themselves from similar organizations in the eyes of the Lebanese *zu'ama*. The party's commitment to the religious tenets of Islam produced a "Mr. Clean" narrative among the Shi'a communities in Lebanon.¹²⁰ This story, coupled with the immediate support from Iran owing to the shared ideology, allowed Hezbollah rapid growth during its formation in the 1980s. With a ready supply of start up financing, the group built social service organizations that continued Hezbollah's narrative as the protectors of the Shi'a and generated more support in terms of manpower and money from the Lebanese population.

The shared cultural identity between the Lebanese diaspora and Hezbollah is much more implicit than its religious identity but just as important. Analysts who track the organization's fundraising often misunderstand the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese clans in the West. Western opponents of Hezbollah typically focuses on what the organization does in order to raise money without asking the more important questions of why and how it is supported financially. The more relevant issue for the West is why Hezbollah can generate support in such different and distant populations. The party's support emerges from the effective management of social services in Lebanon and commitment to the concept of Islamic Resistance toward Israel, which endears them to the Shi'a *zu'ama* and results in the continued donation of millions of dollars annually from a global population. Hezbollah provides a coherent, respected, and effective outlet for two important causes; the support of Lebanese Shi'a and the opposition toward Israel and the West. Hezbollah exploits this sentiment from nearly every corner of the world, especially in the areas that are home to a large Lebanese diaspora population. The cultural and religious

¹²⁰ Ibid., 82.

characteristics of Hezbollah created an invasive and adaptable organization that allows them to draw vast resources from the diverse and seemingly disconnected diaspora communities resulting in Hezbollah's position of power in the Middle East and global influence.

Section 3: The Relationship between Hezbollah and the Diaspora in Africa

The crash of Union des Transport Africaines (UTA) Flight 141 in December 2003 and Hezbollah's response to the event demonstrates the support of the organization to the diaspora in the region.¹²¹ The flight, from Benin to Beirut, crashed during takeoff, killing 141 of the 161 passengers.¹²² The passengers consisted of middle class, Lebanese executives returning to Beirut and press reports indicate they were carrying nearly \$10 million in cash intended for distribution in Lebanon.¹²³ Also on board was Sheikh Ali Damush, described as a senior Hezbollah official who was responsible for collecting donations for the organization from the diaspora communities in West Africa.¹²⁴ In the days following the crash, Hezbollah sent representatives from Lebanon to Benin with condolence payments for the families of the dead passengers.¹²⁵ Hezbollah's immediate and generous reaction indicates the value the organization places on its relationship with the Lebanese diaspora in the region. Hezbollah's leaders views their organization as the protectors and benefactors for a worldwide community of Shi'a and this narrative is derived from their interpretation of Islam and the cultural attributes of Lebanon.

The Lebanese community in West Africa enabled Hezbollah's operations on the continent because of their religious and cultural connection to the organization. Hezbollah's

¹²¹ Levitt, 254.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 255.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 256.

coherent use of Islam and Lebanese culture, born during the Lebanese Civil War, set the party on a path that extended its influence far from where it emerged. Africa was one of the first and most beneficial support areas overseas for Hezbollah. Using its function exploitation of religion and Lebanese culture, Hezbollah connected its operations in Lebanon to the Shi'a diaspora population living in Africa. The confluence of this support along ideological and cultural lines translates into millions of dollars annually for Hezbollah's activities and access to global regions outside Lebanon. This connection created opportunities for Hezbollah to draw financial support from the region and open a new front for terrorist operations in support of its goals at home

The history of Lebanese immigration to West Africa created the conditions that precipitated the involvement of Hezbollah in the region. Several hundred thousand Shi'a of Lebanese descent immigrated into the West Africa nations of Sierra Leone, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Benin over the last 150 years forming a sizable diaspora community in the region.¹²⁶ In these communities, the Lebanese immigrants benefited from their newfound economic opportunities and established successful businesses, which in turn attracted more immigrants into the region. The immigration of Lebanese Shi'a into Africa occurred during three distinct phases. The first phase, the establishment of Shi'a communities in West Africa, predated the formation of Hezbollah as an organization and occurred in response to the systematic repression of Shi'a in Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil War marked the second phase and set the conditions for Hezbollah's expansion into Africa.¹²⁷ This phase saw politically mobilized Shi'a immigrating into Africa bringing personal and ideological links to Hezbollah into the region. The final phase, which enabled the continued connection between Hezbollah and the diaspora community in

¹²⁶ Bierwirth, "The Lebanese Communities of Cote d'Ivoire," 83.

¹²⁷ Hourani, "Lebanese Diaspora and Homeland Relations," 2.

Africa, occurred following the Lebanese Civil War and continues today. During this era, Hezbollah extended its reach into a variety of legitimate and criminal enterprises in the region, which solidified the party's support base and presence in Africa. The connection between Hezbollah and the Lebanese diaspora community in Africa reflects the way these communities view their homeland. Individually and collectively, the Lebanese immigrants have a sense of solidarity with Lebanon that endures throughout generations.¹²⁸ Hezbollah benefits from this link between the diaspora and the homeland by providing the vision and essential services for the Shi'a *zu'ama* in Lebanon that endears them to the families abroad.

Lebanese immigrants integrated into West African communities during the early 20th century because of the lack of economic opportunity in their homeland. These Lebanese immigrants created a community that prospered financially while retaining deep cultural connections to their families in Lebanon. The Shi'a diaspora left Lebanon for Africa because of the lack of economic opportunity in their homeland.¹²⁹ In Africa, the prosperity of the diaspora empowered their cultural obligation in the returning of remittances that benefited their families in Lebanon. However, the Shi'a in Lebanon lacked effective representation at home and their economic comfort depended upon the individual success of family members living abroad. The Shi'a political mobilization in Lebanon during the 1970s created a sense of unity for the Lebanese at home that expanded opportunities for their families to support them abroad.

The exodus of Lebanese fleeing the violence of the Lebanese Civil War brought with it the political unity and religious identity that made the region ripe for the expansion of Hezbollah's influence. Ideological characteristics underpinned the new surge of Lebanese Shi'a

¹²⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁹ Levitt, 249.

immigrants in West Africa in the 1970s that fostered the emergence of Hezbollah in the region. The context of the Lebanese diaspora communities in Lebanon changed following the political mobilization of the Shi'a in Lebanon. Under the leadership of Musa Sadr, Shi'a political organizations attempted to rectify the perceived oppression experienced by the community. This movement deeply changed the perspective of Shi'a Lebanese who eventually made their way into West Africa.¹³⁰ The arrival of Shi'a Lebanese immigrants into established diaspora communities brought with them characteristics that encouraged communal involvement based around Islamic concepts of charity and identity. The diaspora communities in Africa now included thousands of recent arrivals who possessed a willingness to support the organizations that they perceived protected their families within Lebanon.¹³¹ Combined with the historic Lebanese practice of sending remittances back to their families, the new Shi'a immigrants began fundraising for the organizational movements in line with their ideological vision.¹³² The diaspora community in West Africa, with a politically mobilized population directly linked to their families in Lebanon, created a situation that Hezbollah exploited for enduring financial support.

Hezbollah succeeded against rival organizations in expanding its influence into the West African diaspora communities because of the legitimacy it earned from its pious and effective reputation. The destruction in Shi'a communities during the Lebanese Civil War allowed Hezbollah to harness the support of the diaspora community in West Africa, which exemplified its growing legitimacy in Lebanon and abroad. Hezbollah's provision of social assistance brings

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Hourani, 4.

essential relief for deprived Shi'a communities affected by the fighting between various factions during the war.¹³³ Hezbollah's approach to the diaspora communities in West Africa emphasizes its narrative claiming it was the legitimate protectors of the Shi'a *zu'ama* in Lebanon.¹³⁴ This message is characterized by its religious and cultural foundation, as opposed the directive methods adopted by the rival organization AMAL, which resulted in support that the Central Intelligence Agency described as, "many Lebanese in Africa are likely to rally to Hezbollah's side and provide the movement with financial and material support."¹³⁵ When compared to rival Shi'a organizations fundraising, which the diaspora perceives as simple extortion, it is easy to see why Hezbollah experienced rapid success and growth in Africa.

Hezbollah's success and control in the region combines the continued political, militant, and religious legitimacy from Lebanon and applies it to the region. Hezbollah facilitates the collection of money from the diaspora in West Africa through a donation campaign of targeting businesses owned by Lebanese Shi'a under the religious auspices of providing a *zakat*.¹³⁶ The movement of Hezbollah financiers collecting for the organization funds not only its social services in Lebanon but also militant Islamic resistance activities. The diaspora community's perception of Hezbollah as the most pious and effective representatives of their families in Lebanon ensures their long-term support. When donating money, the diaspora has faith that Hezbollah will use it in the pursuit of two clear and appealing objectives; a violent opposition to

¹³³ Flanigan and Abdel-Samad, "Hezbollah's Social Jihad: Nonprofits as Resistance Organizations," accessed November 18, 2014, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/hezbollahs-social-jihad-nonprofits-resistance-organizations>

¹³⁴ Levitt, 250.

¹³⁵ Douglas Farah, "Hezbollah's External Support Network in West Africa and Latin America," *International Assessment and Strategy Center*, August 4, 2006, accessed October 28, 2014, http://www.strategycenter.net/research/pubID.118/pub_detail.asp

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Israel and the welfare of Shi'a Lebanese in Lebanon. Hezbollah achieves a substantial level of support from the diaspora, estimated in millions of dollars annually, because of its commitment to the Islamic tenet of charity and the organization's efficient reputation for alleviating the suffering of the disaffected Shi'a within Lebanon.

Hezbollah's presence in West Africa opened a new front for its terrorist activities and successfully exported its concept of Islamic Resistance outside of its homeland in Lebanon. Hezbollah sponsored terrorism threatens the regional stability of West Africa and supports Hezbollah's goal of worldwide Islamic Resistance to the west. Hezbollah uses the permissive environment, enabled by the support of diaspora populations and weak governance in Africa, to support its regional interests in Lebanon and on the behest of its primary strategic sponsor, Iran.¹³⁷ Hezbollah's operations in Africa serve a variety of purposes for the organization but remain focused on its pursuit of a worldwide Islamic Resistance to Israel and the West. From the mid-1980s until today, Hezbollah established a trend in Africa of conducting hijackings, raising money through criminal activities, and directly supporting other terrorist groups. All of its operations on the continent attempt to enhance the organization's position within Lebanon while weakening the party's enemies. However, without the sympathetic local Lebanese diaspora population Hezbollah would lack the necessary support to allow it to operate freely in the region.

Hezbollah conducted a variety of terrorist operations in Africa that directly supported its goals within Lebanon. Hezbollah's relationship to the Lebanese diaspora in Africa allowed the organization to open a new front for its terrorist activities against the West. In 1987, Hezbollah

¹³⁷ Ellis Shuman, "Mossad Warns: Hezbollah Planning to Kidnap Israelis in Africa," *Israel Insider*, October 27, 2003, accessed November 9, 2014, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1009218/posts>

operative Hussein Ali Mohammed Hariri hijacked Air Afrique Flight 56 enroute from Brazzaville, Congo to Paris, France.¹³⁸ This hijacking and its attempt to land in Beirut was an attempt to secure the release of another Hezbollah agent captured by German intelligence, Mohammed Hammadi.¹³⁹ While the operation was ultimately unsuccessful, passengers subdued Hariri during a refueling stop in Geneva, it required synchronization in putting the hijacker and his weapons aboard the plane during multiple stops in West Africa.¹⁴⁰ What is clear about this episode is that Hezbollah possessed a tactical goal—the release of its member Hammadi and enough freedom of action within the region—to plan and execute a complicated operation far from Hezbollah’s home base in Lebanon. The presence and likely support of the Shi’a diaspora in West Africa enabled Hezbollah to carry out a terrorist act, tied to its immediate regional interests in Lebanon, in an area seemingly inaccessible to the organization.

Hezbollah uses the access enabled by the diaspora community in West Africa in support of its ideological partner Iran. The contested governance space in Africa combined with the permissive environment permitted by the Lebanese diaspora allows Hezbollah to support its allies within the region. Iran, using Hezbollah as its proxy force on the continent, increased its influence amongst the Shi’a communities in Africa after the Islamic Revolution in 1979.¹⁴¹ The Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) used the partnership with Hezbollah, developed during the party’s founding during the Lebanese Civil War, to recruit, train, and employ militant cells in Africa which threaten Israeli and Western institutions in the region.¹⁴² Hezbollah’s ability

¹³⁸ Levitt, 251.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 253.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 265.

¹⁴² Ibid., 267.

to serve the interests of Iran in Africa belies the scope of the support they receive from the local diaspora communities. Even when the interests of the local Lebanese in Africa do not match the interests of Hezbollah, they still have the ability to operate with tacit acceptance because of the deep cultural and religious relationships that they built with the diaspora. The willingness of the Lebanese diaspora to accept the risk associated with serving Iranian interests indicates the high degree of influence Hezbollah has in the region. Hezbollah's operations in Africa threaten Israeli and Western interests and support its concept of a worldwide Islamic Resistance.

When necessary, Hezbollah supports rival Sunni terrorist groups in Africa that further threaten Israel and the West outside of the Middle East. Hezbollah's goal of exporting the Islamic revolution faced opposition initially from Sunni organizations also operating in Africa during the 1980's.¹⁴³ However, Hezbollah put aside its religious differences with Sunni terrorists and established shared training areas with Al-Qaeda in Sudan during the 1990's.¹⁴⁴ One particular meeting between Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda during the 1990's included the mastermind behind the 1983 Marine Barracks bombing in Lebanon, Imad Mughniyeh, and the head of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden.¹⁴⁵ This relationship allowed Al-Qaeda access to the support and expertise of Hezbollah's most experienced terrorist operative and likely contributed to the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings. Hezbollah's ability to work with its religious rivals in the pursuit of its global Islamic Resistance to the West emerges because of the access granted by the diaspora in Africa.

¹⁴³ Farah, "Hezbollah's External Support Network in West Africa and Latin America," 2.

¹⁴⁴ Levitt, 270.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Lebanese diaspora community in Africa allows Hezbollah's exploitation of a valuable market for illegal fundraising. In addition to the collection of money through religious *zakat* from the diaspora in West Africa, Hezbollah is involved in a multitude of criminal activities which also raise considerable sums of money for the organization. The history of West Africa is fraught with conflict, which creates an environment without legitimate governance which Hezbollah exploits to fund its operations.¹⁴⁶ Within the region, the members of the Lebanese diaspora became involved in illegal enterprises that also supported the ideological vision of Hezbollah. With its criminal involvement and the sympathetic view of the organization, Hezbollah positioned itself to benefit financially from crime. Hezbollah expanded its influence in the region by participating in several criminal operations including the conflict diamonds trade, selling of illegal weapons, and narcotics trafficking.¹⁴⁷ The Lebanese diaspora communities provided sufficient stability and support in Africa, which gave Hezbollah access to the resources and personalities necessary for productive criminal ventures. While it is difficult to determine the specific amount of money Hezbollah raised through these activities, it is no doubt in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually.¹⁴⁸ Without the access enabled through the Lebanese diaspora, it is unlikely that Hezbollah could have achieved the success it has with its criminal dealings.

Hezbollah has a dialectic relationship with the diaspora in West Africa that enables access and support for its operations far outside its home base in Lebanon. The Lebanese Shi'a diaspora community in West Africa supports Hezbollah because of religious and cultural

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 248.

¹⁴⁷ Frank C. Urbancic, "Hezbollah's Global Reach: Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia," US Congress, House Committee on International Relations, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2006/73352.htm>.

¹⁴⁸ Levitt, 248-274.

connections inherent to Islam and Lebanon. Hezbollah exploits these connections to further its own regional and global interests, which manifest through donation collection, criminal activities, and terrorist operations in Africa. However, Hezbollah's relationship with the diaspora community in Africa is not simply a one-way street. When the diaspora in Africa experience a crisis, Hezbollah is quick to react in support of its important constituents abroad as the crash of UTA Flight 141 indicates. The presence of Hezbollah in Africa demonstrates the power inherent in the convergence between Lebanese culture and Shi'a Islam. Hezbollah enjoys the fruits of a relationship between itself and the diaspora, which enables its continued access on the continent. Hezbollah's presence in this community threatens the regional security of Africa and the global interests of the United States.

Conclusion

Hezbollah is arguably the most powerful and misunderstood non-state actor in the world today. The relevance of the organization continues to grow and confound Western historians and strategists. Even though the organization represents a small population from an impoverished country, Hezbollah wields international power far exceeding its humble beginnings. Hezbollah's international relevance is on display in Iraq today.¹⁴⁹ Currently, Hezbollah is an ally with Iran and the United States in the fight against ISIS in Iraq. The organization is a key actor on the international stage whose interests, actions, and messages require the attention of much larger and seemingly more powerful nation states. Hezbollah's legitimacy, derived from its religious and cultural characteristics, allows the group to exist as the worldwide phenomenon that we now see.

¹⁴⁹ Liz Sly and Suzan Haidamous, "Lebanon's Hezbollah Acknowledges Battling the Islamic State in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2015, accessed March 19, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/lebanons-hezbollah-acknowledges-battling-the-islamic-state-in-iraq/2015/02/16/4448b21a-b619-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a_story.html

Hezbollah's global influence emerges from its religious, cultural, and social characteristics that allow it to remain an existential threat to Israel and a powerful non-state actor against the United States. The Western proclivity to characterize the group as simply a terrorist organization feeds into Hezbollah's narrative and ensures its continued asymmetric advantage over its rivals. The true story of Hezbollah is not one of terrorism but one of religious and cultural identity.

The religious aspect of Hezbollah provides its underlying ideological foundation, describes the form of the organization, and helps explain its current success. Nasrallah equates the success of Hezbollah with the religious devotion of its members who are, "a group of people who dedicate themselves to God Almighty and decide to become martyrs in the fight against the enemy, in spite of the obvious fact that there is no balance of power either militarily or in fighting abilities, these people deserve to call themselves Hezbollah – the Party of God."¹⁵⁰ The self-sacrifice and dedication inherent in the religious zeal of Hezbollah's members allowed the organization to survive its tumultuous birth during the Lebanese Civil War and the decade's long war against Israel and the West. Religion provides Hezbollah with support from a wide variety of partners, from millions of individuals to dozens of nation states, because of the shared ideological identity. The relevance derived from Islam, and the support that entails, ensures Hezbollah maintains its legitimacy amongst its support base as long as its faith endures.

Today, members of Hezbollah and its supporters are on every continent, far from the contested area in Lebanon. Hezbollah's global presence emerged from Lebanon's distinct culture, which placed emphasis on family and clan relationships through patronage regardless of the

¹⁵⁰ Nasrallah, Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, 127.

distance between them.¹⁵¹ Hezbollah's exploitation of the clan-based culture of Lebanon combined with its religious identity is the reason why the organization draws support far from its homeland and can influence events in accordance with its vision. Hezbollah translated the legitimacy and relevance from its domestic constituents to their international supporters which positions the organization as the most dominant non-state actor in the Middle East today.

Africa, with its prominent Lebanese diaspora community, was one of the first and longest lasting support areas for Hezbollah. Hezbollah's effective success in its social and militant operations in Lebanon endeared it to the Shi'a diaspora population living in Africa. This relationship emerged because of Hezbollah shared religious and cultural identity with the Lebanese diaspora in the region. Hezbollah exploited this relationship for its own financial benefit and created new opportunities that threaten the interests of Israel and the West.

Most western historians and political scientist continue to focus their efforts of analysis on the terrorist aspect of Hezbollah as an organization. While the movement was born in an environment, the Lebanese Civil War, in which terrorism was the predominant form of the organization, it has significantly evolved since the 1980s. A deeper understanding of Hezbollah, which was the goal of this monograph, requires a detailed examination of the logic for its current existence that gives plausible indications for its future. The logic of Hezbollah comes from Shi'a Islam and the unique cultural characteristics of Lebanon. The two defining characteristics of the organization, religion and culture, give more insight into Hezbollah than the multitude of analysis available on its militant and terrorist activities. Until historians and strategists stop thinking about Hezbollah from predominantly tactical lenses, the Party of God will retain its asymmetric advantage that continues to confound and amaze its enemies.

¹⁵¹ Norton, 37.

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